

ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING POLICIES

FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAMS

Effective June 1, 2003

Office of Adult Education and Literacy
Virginia Department of Education



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EFFECTIVE JUNE 1, 2003

Office of Adult Education and Literacy
Virginia Department of Education
P.O. Box 2120
Richmond, Virginia 23218-2120

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FOREWORD

In 1998, Congress raised the expectations for workforce development by enacting the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Title II of WIA, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, created a partnership among the federal government, states, and localities to provide adult education and literacy services. The new law set expectations to ensure that adult learners obtain the appropriate skills needed to function effectively in the workplace. The National Reporting System (NRS) was developed as a WIA accountability system to determine the degree to which state and local programs meet learner achievement targets.

This document is for all local programs that receive WIA and matching state funds and provide adult education services. The policies are written to ensure observance of NRS and state policies related to the adult education data collection process. It is anticipated that these policies, in their present form, will be adopted and aligned systematically in all adult education programs in Virginia. Users of *Assessment and Reporting Policies for Adult Education and Literacy Programs* should note that (a) policies will undergo revision from time to time, and (b) any reference to policies implies the latest revision.

As Director of the Office of Adult Education and Literacy, I strongly support these policies. Preparing adults for the demands of the modern workforce requires our best efforts to provide adult education services of sufficient quality and duration to help learners acquire literacy and employability skills. Comments concerning *Assessment and Reporting Policies for Adult Education and Literacy Programs* are welcome and should be directed to the Virginia Department of Education, Office of Adult Education and Literacy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Yvonne V. Thayer".

Yvonne V. Thayer, Director
Office of Adult Education and Literacy
Virginia Department of Education

PART 1.

SCOPE AND APPLICATION

The Virginia Department of Education, Office of Adult Education and Literacy is required by NRS to set policies for collecting and reporting accountability data to NRS.

Confidence in adult education services provided by local programs is demonstrated in data collected and reported to NRS. Adult education services target every eligible Virginian (see 3.1 for eligibility information). Future funding to local programs will be determined by number of learners served and by learner achievement as documented through the following: gains in educational functioning level, receipt of GED or equivalent, entering post-secondary education, obtaining employment, retaining employment.

PART 2.

DEFINITIONS

The following words and terms, when used in this document, will have the meanings indicated.

- 2.1 Ability to benefit:** The point at which an adult qualifies for selected programs or services based on achievement results. Tests such as the TABE may be used to establish an “ability to benefit” and may result in an individual’s acceptance or rejection for programs or services based on assessment scores.
- 2.2 Adult Basic Education:** Those educational functioning levels for adults who lack competence in reading, writing, speaking, problem solving, or computation at a level necessary to function in society, on a job, or in the family.
- 2.3 Adult Secondary Education:** Those educational functioning levels for adults who have some literacy skills and can function in everyday life but are not proficient or do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent.
- 2.4 Certified assessor:** An individual who has completed state-approved training (locally or with state staff) to manage the local assessment program, including the following topics: test security, administering and scoring specific tests, and interpreting test results.
- 2.5 Completed a level:** A learner advances from one educational functioning level to the next, based on the learner’s posttest score.
- 2.6 Completed a level and advanced one or more levels:** Includes the definition of “completed a level” and further means the learner’s posttest score enables him/her to advance one or more educational functioning levels.

- 2.7 Contact hours:** Those hours of instruction or instructional activity the learner receives from the program.

What may be counted:

- Instructional hours in all ABE, ASE, and ESL classes designed to advance adult learners in educational functioning level
- Distance learning and home-bound instruction
- Tutoring or participation in a learning lab
- Assessing learner, such as for educational functioning level or the Official GED Practice Test

What may not be counted:

- Homework
- Community education classes such as parenting and computer literacy
- Time spent in Official GED Tests

- 2.8 Disability status:** The learner has a record of, or is regarded as having, any type of physical or mental impairment, including a learning disability, that substantially limits or restricts one or more major life activities, including walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, learning, and working. [See 8.2.B]

- 2.9 Educational functioning level:** A measure of learner literacy skills within three educational functioning level descriptors: Basic Reading and Writing, Numeracy Skills, and Functional and Workplace Skills. The educational functioning level descriptors provide a range of skills a learner may possess at the respective level. The twelve educational functioning levels are organized in three categories:

- A. Adult Basic Education
 - Beginning Literacy
 - Beginning
 - Low Intermediate
 - High Intermediate
- B. Adult Secondary Education
 - Low
 - High
- C. English as a Second Language
 - Beginning Literacy
 - Beginning
 - Low Intermediate
 - High Intermediate
 - Low Advanced
 - High Advanced

- 2.10 Employed:** Those learners who work as paid employees, who work in their own business or farm, or who work 15 hours or more per week as UNPAID workers on a farm or in a business operated by a member of the family. Also included are learners who are not currently working, but who have jobs or businesses from which they are temporarily absent, such as those on furlough, maternity leave, or short-term disability leave. [See 8.2.B]

- 2.11 English as a Second Language:** The NRS term for those limited English proficient students who have a focus on improving English communication skills such as speaking, reading, writing, and listening.
- 2.12 Enrolled:** The learner has 12 or more contact hours and has been pretested.
- 2.13 Enter employment:** The learner obtains full- or part-time paid employment before the end of the reporting year in which the learner exits the program. Employment is verified by the state one quarter year after the learner exits the program. [See 7.4]
- 2.14 Ethnicity:** Comprised of the following categories according to NRS: American Native or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Black or African American (non-Hispanic), Hispanic or Latino, White (non-Hispanic). [See 8.2.A]
- 2.15 Exiting the program:** When the learner Finishes and/or Leaves the program. Exiting the program is a primary component of establishing Follow-up goals. [See 7.4]
- **Finishes the program:** The learner met his/her goal established at enrollment and no longer receives instruction or services.
 - **Leaves the program:** The learner exits the program or receives no services for 90 consecutive days and has no scheduled services.
- 2.16 Exit quarter:** The quarter of the year in which the learner finishes and/or leaves the program. [See 7.4]
- 2.17 Follow-up goals:** Four learner goals that may be established during the reporting year in which the learner exits the program. Follow-up goals are as follows: obtain employment, retain employment, achieve GED or high school credential, and enter post-secondary education or training. [See 7.4]
- 2.18 Instruction:** A program-sponsored activity designed to advance adult learners in educational functioning level.
- 2.19 Learner:** An adult who is eligible to enroll. [See 3.1]
- 2.20 Not in the labor force:** A learner is not employed and is not seeking employment. [See 8.2.B]
- 2.21 Outcome measures:** Those outcomes of adult education which include learning gains; advancement to further education and training; credentials obtained; and employment, family, and community measures.
- 2.22 Program:** An adult education program funded by WIA grant and matching state funds.
- 2.23 Program enrollment type:** Describes the main emphasis of instruction for a set of classes. Examples are workplace literacy and family literacy. [See 8.2.B]

- 2.24 Public assistance status:** A learner is receiving financial assistance from federal, state, or local government agencies, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), food stamps, refugee cash assistance, and general assistance and aid to the blind or totally disabled. Social Security benefits, unemployment insurance, and employment-funded disability are not included under this definition. [See 8.2.B]
- 2.25 Remaining within a level:** The posttest score represents no advancement in educational functioning level.
- 2.26 Retain employment:** The learner remains employed in the third quarter after the exit quarter. [See 7.4]
- 2.27 Rural residency status:** A learner resides in a place with a population of less than 2,500 and outside an urbanized area. An urbanized area includes a population of 50,000 or more in a city and adjacent areas of high density. [See 8.2.B]
- 2.28 Separated (withdraws) before completed:** The learner exits the program or receives no services for 90 consecutive days and has no services scheduled.
- 2.29 State:** Virginia Department of Education, Office of Adult Education and Literacy.
- 2.30 Unemployed:** A learner who is not working, but is seeking employment, who has made specific efforts to find a job and is available for work. [See 8.2.B]

PART 3.

ELIGIBILITY

- 3.1** Adult education programs supported by the Workforce Investment Act will only serve students according to the following criteria. Eligible adults are those individuals:
- A. Who are at least 18 years of age, with the exception of those who are at least 16 years of age and released from compulsory attendance by the local School Board;
 - B. Who lack sufficient mastery of basic educational skills to enable the individuals to function effectively in society;
 - (1) Learners would be deemed eligible if they had obtained a high school diploma but pretest at an educational functioning level less than Adult Secondary High;
 - C. Who do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent;
 - D. Who are not enrolled in a secondary or postsecondary institution;
 - E. Who provide documentation of legal entry status.
- 3.2** Programs will not report to NRS those adults whose employers are funding a class specifically designed for workplace skills.

PART 4.

ASSESSMENT

The assessment policies are designed to provide a detailed explanation of the state and local program responsibilities for assessment. These policies apply to the primary assessments that programs use to report educational gain in compliance with NRS requirements.

Programs may continue to use additional assessments in support of the teaching and learning process. However, local-level assessments are not a substitute for those standardized instruments used for NRS reporting.

STATE RATIONALE

In accordance with NRS policies, the state will establish and oversee a written assessment policy in compliance with NRS requirements and will provide training to local programs in order to implement the assessment policy uniformly. The state will select standardized assessments that are valid and appropriate for adult learners. In addition, the state will conduct periodic quality control reviews of assessment procedures to ensure that local staff is correctly following procedures.

LOCAL PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1** Starting July 1, 2003, local programs will administer appropriate assessments, from the list of state-selected standardized assessments, for pretesting and posttesting in Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE), and English as a Second Language (ESL).¹
- A. The selected assessment instruments for ABE and ASE programs are:
 - (1) Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS)
 - (2) Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) Forms 7 and 8 (and Forms 9 and 10 upon availability) - Levels L, E, M, D, A, Survey or Complete Battery²
 - B. The selected assessment instruments for ESOL programs are:
 - (1) Basic English Skills Test (BEST), LE-4, Forms B and C
 - (2) BEST Plus
 - (3) Better Edition Structured Test - English Language (BESTEL) Forms 1, 2, and 3
 - (4) Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS)
 - (5) Arlington Employment and Education Program (REEP) ESOL Writing Assessment
 - C. Assessments will be administered in one or more of the following areas:
 - (1) Reading
 - (2) Writing
 - (3) Mathematics
 - (4) Speaking and listening
 - (5) Functional or workplace skills
- 4.2** Program staff administering and scoring assessment instruments that are used for NRS purposes must be trained and certified.

¹ Unless no longer in print and no longer available for purchase, all instruments on the state-approved list will be acceptable to use for no fewer than five years from the date of approval.

² Programs should use the Complete Battery if programs are asked to provide "ability-to-benefit" information. [See 2.1]

PART 5.

PRETEST

The National Reporting System requires that the state establish a uniform time for programs to pretest adult learners as the basis for determining accurate placement in an educational functioning level corresponding with NRS definitions.

LOCAL REQUIREMENTS

- 5.1 Adult education programs will complete a pretest assessment for initial learner placement in an educational functioning level by 12 contact hours.
 - A. One hundred percent of learners who have at least 12 contact hours will be pretested each reporting year.
 - B. Initial placement is the baseline upon which programs measure learner educational functioning level advancement.
- 5.2 Adult learners will be placed in the appropriate educational functioning level based on the results of the pretest. When individuals are assessed in more than one area (e.g., mathematics, reading, and writing) and test scores reflect different educational functioning levels, the learner is placed in the educational functioning level represented by the lowest test score.
- 5.3 Educational functioning level placement may carry over to the next reporting year if documentation supports instructionally sound judgment that the learner remains at the same educational functioning level.
- 5.4 Pretest scores will be used as indicators to develop the most effective instructional plan of action for the learner, i.e., emphasizing those areas showing need.

PART 6.

POSTTEST

STATE RATIONALE

An assessment of progress will be administered at a time established by state policy in order to determine advancement, or no advancement, in educational functioning level.

LOCAL PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

- 6.1 One hundred percent of enrolled learners who reach the required contact hours in 6.2 A, B, or C will be posttested each reporting year.
- 6.2 **All programs shall describe in their application to the state a time frame for posttesting.** Such time frames must be accordance with one of the following:

- A. According to test publisher recommendations (listed in the Appendix);
 - B. After 40-60 hours of instruction; or
 - C. At the conclusion of a set instructional period for closed-entry enrollment classes.
- 6.3** Contact hours may carry over to the next reporting year to accrue 40 hours for posttesting, if documentation supports instructionally sound judgment that the learner should accrue contact hours for the purpose of posttesting.
- 6.4** Any waiver to the posttesting time frame requirement will be at the discretion of the Director of the Office of Adult Education and Literacy on a case-by-case basis. Requests for waiver must be submitted in writing.
- 6.5** Posttest will be administered only in areas pretested.
- 6.6** Posttest assessment scores determine educational functioning level advancement. Posttest score may document proficiency advancement in one or more educational functioning levels, or document no advancement, which is reported as "Remaining within a level."

PART 7.

SETTING AND ACHIEVING GOALS

Learner goals define the areas in which instruction and learning are focused and provide an accountability benchmark by which program and learner progress can be assessed. Goals required for NRS data should be attainable and measurable within a specified time frame.

LOCAL PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES

- 7.1** Programs will have procedures to orient learners to the adult education and literacy program and establish appropriate goals for instruction and learning.
- A. Assist learners in identifying their goal(s);
 - B. Set a realistic timeline for goal attainment; and
 - C. Target evidence of goal achievement.
- 7.2** Program instruction and services will be oriented to help the learner achieve all goals.

THE THREE TYPES OF GOALS

- 7.3** Educational functioning level gain is the required literacy goal for all learners.
- A. The educational functioning level advancement goal is the default goal, regardless of whether the learner also designates long-term personal or follow-up goal(s).
 - B. The literacy goal is to achieve the next highest educational functioning level.

- 7.4 Follow-up goals are set at the program level, verified quarterly at the state level, and reported annually to NRS.
- A. The four follow-up outcomes are as follows:
 - (1) Entered employment
 - (2) Retained employment
 - (3) Attained GED or secondary school diploma
 - (4) Entered postsecondary education or training
 - B. Follow-up goals may only be set when all of the following criteria are met:
 - (1) Follow-up goals are set any time during the reporting year in which the learner is expected to exit the adult education program.
 - (2) The established follow-up goal is realistically attainable by the end of the reporting year in which the learner exits the adult education program and verifiable within the first quarter after the reporting year in which the learner exits the program. In the case of “Retaining employment,” the goal is verifiable the third quarter after exiting the program.
 - (3) For learners who establish a follow-up goal of “Entered employment” or “Retained employment,” program staff will provide the state with the learner’s Social Security number, exit date, and signed state consent form, granting permission to use the Social Security number for data matching purposes that will verify goal attainment. If the Social Security number is not provided or the consent form is not signed, a follow-up goal may not be established.
 - (4) For a learner who establishes a follow-up goal of “Obtained a GED or Secondary School Diploma” and/or “Entered Postsecondary Education or Training,” program staff will provide the state with the learner’s first and last name (also middle name if possible); birth month, date, and year; and exit date for survey method to verify goal attainment.
 - (5) The follow-up goal cannot be set unless programs can provide instruction and any continued services to facilitate a learner’s achievement of follow-up goals, including beyond the learner’s exiting the program.
- 7.5 The learner may establish a long-term personal goal.
- A. This goal serves to record the learner’s compelling reason to break through barriers and enter the adult education program, e.g., “I want to be a teacher.”
 - B. The personal goal is documented outside of NRS reporting requirements and is not reported to the state or NRS.

PART 8.

NRS REPORTING DATABASE

STATE RATIONALE

The state will implement the Reporting Database System and provide oversight and training to verify local programs are following state and NRS data collection policies and procedures. The state will establish time requirements for local programs to report data and will have documented procedures to verify that data reported accurately reflects the data collected.

State and local staff may access the Reporting Database System at any time during the reporting year. The state will review data submissions by local program and/or conduct an on-site audit on a quarterly basis to verify the validity, reliability, and comparability status of data and data collection instruments and to identify program improvements and accomplishments.

LOCAL PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

- 8.1** The state will maintain all data for adult education programs in Virginia on a secure server.
- A. Programs will use one of the following two methods to submit data into the state system:
 - (1) Programs will use the state-developed Reporting Database System, or
 - (2) Programs will export data in electronic format
 - B. Programs will submit data on the first Friday of every month.
 - C. Program managers are responsible for ensuring proper and timely data collection and entry.
- 8.2** Descriptive and participative status data will be obtained from the learner during intake and will be kept current. The following descriptive and participative data are required:
- A. Descriptive data
 - (1) First, middle, and last name
 - (2) Birth date
 - (3) Intake date
 - (4) Student number
 - (5) Social Security number (optional; may be the same as the student number)
 - (6) Ethnicity
 - (7) Gender
 - B. Participative data:
 - (1) Disability status
 - (2) Employment status
 - (3) Public assistance status
 - (4) Rural residency status
 - (5) Program type
 - (6) Institutional program
 - (7) Secondary status measures
- 8.3** Learner files should be maintained according to local school division policy or applicable state policy.

APPENDIX - TEST PUBLISHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Each test publisher has determined recommendations for posttesting based on validity and reliability. These recommendations are to be used for posttesting in accordance with Policy 6.2.

Assessment instruments [Policy 4.1]	Recommended elapsed instructional time before posttesting
ABE and ASE assessments	
CASAS	80-100 hours
TABE	six months
ESOL assessments	
BEST	80-100 hours
BEST Plus	80-100 hours
BESTEL	three months
REEP	80-100 hours



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